

PRINCE BLOW AND HIS MEMOIRS in

at his side. The Grand Duke Friedrich of Baden, the wisest man then sitting on a German throne, knew the strength and weakness of his nephew's character, and, like King Albert of Saxony, prayed ardently that the new Minister, while utilizing the ruler's shining qualities for the good of his people, might keep his dangerous impulses within bounds.

The relation of the Chancellor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Hohenzollern Empire varied widely with the holders of those high offices. Bismarck's Foreign Secretaries, the elder Billow, Hatzfeldt, Herbert Bismarck, were cyphers. Under Caprivi, a soldier who knew nothing of foreign affairs, Marschall, with Holstein behind him, had a good deal of power, which he retained under Hohenlohe. When Billow was installed in the Wilhelmstrasse in 1897 Hohenlohe was seventy-eight, and, though still vigorous in mind, was feeling the strain of years. Thus the first professional diplomatist since the fall of Bismarck to hold the rudder became the main director of foreign policy from the outset, and when he succeeded Hohenlohe as Chancellor in 1900 there was no one to say him nay save the Kaiser himself. That the supreme responsibility for the course of the German ship between 1897 and 1909 is shared by these two men was known to us all, and the exact degree of responsibility attaching to each in the great decisions of the time was revealed by the publication of *Die Grosse Politik*. Billow's Memoirs are a precious though far less trustworthy addition to our knowledge. He naturally makes the best case for himself, and he is entitled to remind the reader of the unusual difficulties of his position. His welcome at Kiel, he tells us, was delightful in its cordiality and frank simplicity. He adds that it was only by degrees

that he learned of the reefs that lurked beneath
the shining
surface of the sea.

In these glittering pages we see a ruler of
outstanding gifts,
lofty ideals, and not a few attractive qualities. We
read of his
friendliness, his goodness of heart, his
naturalness when
alone with a friend, his willingness to listen to
" curtain
lectures " from a trusted adviser, his brightness
and charm.
His intellectual powers were considerable, his
knowledge
wide if not deep, his quickness of apprehension
phenomenal,
while his eloquence never ceased to impress
such an accom-
plished rival and such a critical judge as Billow
himself. In
the latter respect indeed nature had been too
lavish in her
favours, for William II thirsted to make use of
the gift for